

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /054 W

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R 051000Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9242

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, BM

SUBJECT: MINISTER OF MINES OUSTED

1. TERSE PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT MARCH 5 STATES THAT THE ELECTION LAST YEAR TO THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY OF MINISTER OF MINES DR. NYI NYI HAS BEEN INVALIDATED. ELECTORAL COMMISSION CITES AS CAUSE CONSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENT THAT BOTH PARENTS OF CANDIDATES FOR ELECTION TO THE ASSEMBLY BE BURMESE NATIONALS. WITH HIS OUSTER FROM THE ASSEMBLY, DR. NYI NYI AUTOMATICALLY LOSES THE MINES MINISTRY PORTFOLIO SINCE MINISTERS MUST BE SELECTED FROM AMONG ASSEMBLY MEMBERS.

2. COMMENT: THE DEPARTURE OF DR. NYI NYI HAS LONG BEEN RUMORED (WEEKA #52, JANUARY 3, 1975) AND THE LATEST SPATE OF REPORTS FINALLY PROVED TRUE. ONE OF THE TWO CIVILIAN MEMBERS OF THE CABINET, DR. NYI NYI WAS DISTRUSTED BY THE MILITARY AND EX-MILITARY LEADERSHIP IN THE GOVERNMENT. ALTHOUGH PERHAPS ONE OF THE ABLEST MEMBERS OF THE CABINET, HIS BRUSQUE AND ARROGANT MANNER AND REPUTATION AS A MARXIST EARNED HIM CONSIDERABLE ANIMOSITY. JEALOUSIES OF HIM WERE FURTHER FUELED BY A TIME MAGAZINE ARTICLE LAST YEAR IDENTIFYING HIM AS AMONG FUTURE ASIAN LEADERS. EFFORTS BEFORE LAST JANUARY'S ELECTIONS BY LOCAL BSPP LEADERS TO BAR HIM ON THE SAME CONSTITUTIONAL GROUNDS (ONE OF HIS PARENTS WAS CHINESE) HAD BEEN DEFEATED, REPORTEDLY BY THE PERSONAL INTERVENTION OF PRESIDENT NE WIN. FOR REASONS AS YET UNKNOWN, NE WIN APPARENTLY DECIDED TO ACCEDE TO NYI NYI'S CRITICS. NYI NYI, HOWEVER MAY

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STILL GET AN AMBASSADORSHIP OR SOME OTHER TOP JOB.

3. TWO USUALLY RELIABLE SOURCES WHO REPORTED NYI NYI'S OUSTER MARCH 4 SAID COLONEL MAUNG CHO, NOW DEPUTY MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, WILL SUCCEED HIM. MAUNG CHO HAS VISIBLY BEEN UNDERSTUDYING NYI NYI IN RECENT MONTHS ON IMPORTANT TOURS INCLUDING ONE LAST MONTH TO STUDY MINING OPERATIONS IN WEST GERMANY AND YUGOSLAVIA. IN DOUBT IS THE FUTURE OF SEVERAL WORKING-LEVEL OFFICIALS WHO NYI NYI PROMOTED OR BROUGHT INTO MINISTRY OF MINES TO IMPLEMENT HIS POLICIES. ON THE OTHER HAND, THIS OUSTER COULD CONCEIVABLY STRENGTHEN THE STATUS OF DR. AUNG KHIN, DIRECTOR OF THE MYANMA OIL CORPORATION WHOSE ROLE UNDER NYI NYI WAS SOMEWHAT DEFLATED. AUNG KHIN IS A PROFESSIONALLY SKILLED MAN WHOSE INITIATIVES IN THE OFF SHORE PETROLEUM EXPLORATION ISSUE HAVE PROVED HELPFUL TO US COMMERCIAL INTERESTS.

4. THESE PERSONNEL SHIFTS ARE OF MORE IMPORTANCE TO U.S. INTERESTS THAN MOST SUCH CHANGES WITHIN THE REGIME, SINCE MINES MINISTRY IS NOT ONLY RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTING OFFSHORE PETROLEUM EXPLORATION CONTRACTS BUT FOR POSSIBLE FUTURE FOREIGN PARTICIPATION IN MINING.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CABINET, REMOVAL FROM OFFICE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975RANGOO00572
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750077-0677
From: RANGOON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750380/aaaacued.tel
Line Count: 82
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 JUL 2003 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <13 NOV 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MINISTER OF MINES OUSTED
TAGS: PINT, BM, (NYI NYI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006